

Sūrah 73

Al-Muzzammil

(The Enwrapped One)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The word *al-muzzammil* occurring in the opening verse of this *Sūrah* constitutes its title. It is not related to the subject matter of the *Sūrah*.

Period of Revelation

The *Sūrah* comprises two sections which were revealed at different dates.

The consensus view is that its first section (verses 1–10) was revealed in Makkah. Both its subject matter and the reports of *ahādīth* about its circumstantial setting support the above view. Reports are silent over the exact date of its revelation in the Makkan phase. However, internal evidence helps in dating it.

First, it instructs the Prophet (peace be upon him) to stand up in prayer by night to enable him to shoulder the onerous duty of prophethood and to discharge the responsibility befittingly. It is

therefore obvious that this section must have been revealed in the early days of his prophethood while Allah was training him for his august office.

Secondly, it commands the Prophet (peace be upon him) to recite the Qur'ān in *Tahajjud* prayer by night, half of it (the night) or a bit more. This indicates that at least a substantial portion of the Qur'ān had been revealed by then, which could be recited in prayers spread over a few hours of the night.

Thirdly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is directed to have patience and bear with the excesses committed by his detractors. The Makkan disbelievers on the other hand are seriously warned of divine punishment. It is thus clear that this section was revealed at a time when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had started preaching Islam publicly and the Makkans opposed him vehemently.

Many Qur'ānic scholars hold the view that the second section of the *Sūrah* was also sent down in Makkah. However, others emphasise that it was revealed in Madīnah, a point endorsed by its contents, for it speaks of fighting in the way of Allah. This particular command was not of course applicable in Makkah. Furthermore, it commands that *Zakāh* be paid as an obligatory duty. It is on record that *Zakāh* as a duty, with its prescribed rate, was promulgated in Madīnah and not in Makkah.

Subject Matter and Themes

Verses 1–7 ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) to prepare himself for discharging the great mission assigned to him. A practical way to achieve this is to stand up in prayer for half of the night or a little less or a little more of it.

Verses 8–14 exhort the Prophet (peace be upon him) to devote himself fully to Allah, the Lord of the universe. He should rest content, entrusting everything to Him. He should bear with the opposition of his opponents and not engage with them. He should leave their affairs with Allah; He Himself will deal with them.

Verses 15–19 warn the Makkan opponents of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that Allah has sent His Messenger among them in the same way He sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh. They should better consider the tragic end of the Pharaoh when he refused to

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believe in the Messenger's call. Suppose, if somehow one is spared divine punishment in this world, how could one escape Allah's chastisement on the Day of Resurrection for his disbelief?

The second section of the *Sūrah*, according to Sa'īd ibn Jubayr's report, was revealed ten years later. It announces a reduction in the command for *Tahajjud* prayer, contained in the opening verses of the *Sūrah* (*Tafsīr* of Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, 23, 361). The revised command is that one is free to offer this prayer as much as is convenient to him. However, Muslims must be very particular about offering the five daily obligatory prayers, paying *Zakāh* accurately, and spending their wealth sincerely in the way of Allah. Finally, Muslims are told that their good deeds in this world will not go to waste. These will constitute their asset, as the provision of a traveller who dispatches it in advance for his future residence. He will find this safe and secure with Allah in the Hereafter. It is not only much better than what they amass and hoard in this world, they will also receive a huge reward from Allah, in addition to the recompense for their good deeds.